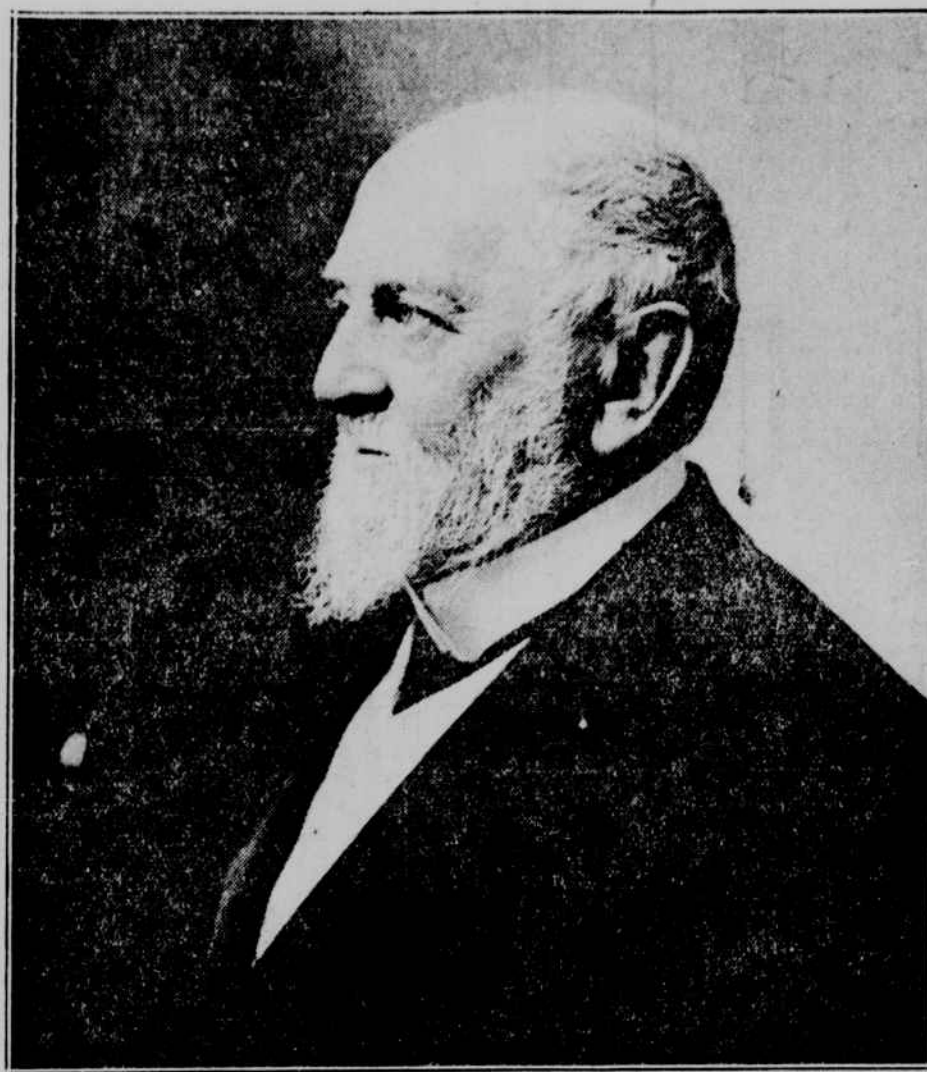


# WHY MUST THE SEA HAVE A MASTER?

By SAMUEL VAN HOUTEN, Dutch Publicist and Statesman

*Holland Asks the Question Through Dr. Van Houten, Whose Discussion of the War and of the Problem of Peace-Making and Peace-Keeping Is Remarkable for Its Frankness and Insight---Sea Conflicts Must Be Prevented by a Common Sea Police.*



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*Is Rivalry in Mutual Destruction Indefinitely to Go On?—It Gets More and More Clear, Says the Dutch Statesman, That the Question Is "No More Some Small Displacement of Power, but the Continuation of Ruin of Our Entire Civilization."*

WHAT Holland is thinking and is likely to do, with war waging around her, is a subject that is of special interest not only to the rest of Europe, but to the United States, which stands with her as a neutral. Although opinion as regards the present state of Holland and its outlook for the future is partly individual and partly conjectural, there are certain points on which the people of Holland agree. First, it is our wish to maintain our entire political and economic independence, without closer relations with any other state. The lines of development of Germany and Holland, economically and politically, have been so divergent since the agrarian and military parties became paramount in Germany that we on our side wish more than ever to continue our international individuality, without any desire, however, to terminate friendly feelings in commercial, scientific and international relations with our neighbor. In the course of our history we suffered so much from France and England, while Germany was weak, that we should not have felt the advantage of a stronger third neighbor. And this neighbor is, of course, as free in his own organization as we wish to be and to remain in ours.

## EVERY DUTCHMAN WILL REJOICE WHEN BELGIUM IS RESTORED TO INDEPENDENCE.

Neither is there any wish to restore any junction, either wholly or in part, with Belgium. The experiment of the Congress of Vienna with the United Netherlands failed, and now we see more clearly than ever that the differences in every respect between north and south are too greatly marked to allow of any union, not even with the Flemish, with whom we are united by a common language. The influx of Belgian refugees has renewed an already strong impression on that point. No Dutchman wishes to take part in any new organization of Belgium, as has been suggested in German quarters, though it might bring us large increase of territory. Western Europe was in the best possible order before Germany made its reckless invasion, and every Dutchman will rejoice with his whole heart when Belgium is restored to full independence. Although there is diversity of opinion here in regard to the morality of the motives of the German army commanders to try to reach Paris through two neutral countries, there is none about the question whether Belgium will have to be restored as a free and individual member among European states.

## HOLLAND'S PLACE IN THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF THE WORLD.

One of the most notable features of the development of modern public opinion in Holland is, so I think, the tendency to take part in some international organization of the world. Lajo Brenlano recommends in the "Berliner Tageblatt" a closer connection of the whole European continent, with the exception of Russia, which would be excluded from his new arrangement. Combinations of this nature on either larger or smaller scale will find no support whatever among the people of Holland. The reason for this is clear. Half a

century ago our States-General ceased to consider our colonies as an estate for the financial benefit of the mother country. We feel our country to be a dual state, with the aggregate of our Asiatic colonies as a twin whom we have to educate, especially in matters of government. This connection with a large Asiatic territory—the minor American self-governing and financially dependent colonies can here be omitted from consideration—has had a great influence on our country by stripping it of the European narrowness of view.

## "PEACE, FREE TRADE AND GOOD WILL AMONG NATIONS."

We are, in consequence of our territorial formation, essentially a world part, one of the unities of a world organization. Americans are able to appreciate this difference merely by looking at the influence the annexation of the Philippines has had upon the American mind and the policy of the government. I happened to be in the United States at the time of Dewey's victory, and, of course, the question "what to do with the Philippines" was common talk. Every thoughtful man felt that this victory brought to his country a quite new task and responsibility, with which we Dutchmen have been growing up for generations.

Moreover, in this matter of an international organization is felt the influence of the choice of The Hague as the seat of the Arbitration Court and as the meeting place of the peace conferences. No longer can we Dutch feel for a league which does not embrace the whole world. And we are working practically for the device of the Cobden Club, "Peace, free trade, good will among nations," without distinction as to race, religion or geographical situation.

## "GREAT BRITAIN HAS NO RIGHT TO MAINTAIN PRESENT PRIZE LAWS."

The question which, next to the fate of Belgium, is paramount for us in the present war is the future of the sea and the maritime laws. We cannot deny the English claim to the majority at sea. Great Britain could not exist if another country had the power of cutting off communications between its parts, scattered as they are over the world. But Great Britain has no claim to the mastery of the sea and no right to maintain the present prize laws. With great satisfaction I have seen in recent utterances, some of them from the German side, that this point is brought into the foreground. Through the debates of the Interparliamentary Union we know that an influential set of public men in England does not support the old prize laws, and there is scarcely any doubt that as soon as the present war is ended her present allies, Russia and France, will take a stand on this point at the side of Germany. That the country of Hugo Grotius, the old defender of the principle of *mare liberum*, has renewed its convictions upon this point under the influence of the troublesome proceedings of both parties in the present war and the damages our countrymen have suffered by them is obvious.

As long as war at sea was limited to efforts to damage their respective men-of-war and to make profit by seizing

merchant ships, the acknowledgment of the inviolability of private property at sea seemed sufficient as the keystone of the efforts of the pacifist movement. If it brought no profit England's interest in supremacy at sea would diminish, and if no damage were feared for tradersmen from the other side acquiescence in England's majority would be possible.

This war has shown that England's majority is dangerous in another way. Till the present war England claimed to want a paramount war fleet only in order not to be exposed to the danger of being unable to secure sufficient food in time of war. That any great Continental country could be starved may have been thought theoretically possible; practically it was not feared. Otherwise Germany could have easily made herself a storehouse of food, which would have prevented England's starving project. Every one who wishes that the coming peace may stop the causes of war has to take into account this new use of England's majority. By the acknowledgment of the inviolability of private property at sea alone could it be made impossible for the future that England, by its enlarged definition of contraband, should continue to have the power to cut off the food supply of every country with insufficient production of its own.

## KNOTTY INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS CENTRE ABOUT THE DARDANELLES.

At the same time the assault of the Allies upon the Dardanelles brings to the front the question of the power over straits and maritime canals. Russia tries at once openly to get the possession of these straits and wishes the Allies to put in her hands this key to the Black Sea, also the key to the Danube. The opening of the dispute over the Dardanelles, of course, draws the attention to other questions of the same sort. At

once it appears that Russia can scarcely be contented in the future by the possession of the Dardanelles; she wishes access to the sea, but she comes through the Dardanelles to only one sea, the Mediterranean, whose two keys, Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, are in the hands of England. Looking at this matter from another aspect, not only Austria and Turkey, but also Italy, Greece and the Mediterranean parts of France and Spain must feel the more how impotent they are against England if ever she uses to the extreme the power which this situation confers.

## ENGLAND IN PREFERENCE TO GERMANY AS MASTER OF THE SEAS.

Germany continues the present war effectively with submarines, of which she has a majority, and Germany claims in an official publication that she wages this war not only for herself, but on behalf of all weaker seafaring nations! This expression from German authorities as to their intentions may contain some comfort for the weaker powers, but there is also the possibility that the creation of a German fleet, greater than England's, would only result in her succeeding the English as masters of the sea. If such should prove to be the case the weaker states would gain nothing. It must be acknowledged that the use England has made of her power in the last century, taken as a whole, has been such that, supposing one of the great powers has to be master of the sea, England would be chosen; certainly in preference to Germany.

## OUT OF THE WAR MAY COME A DEEP-SEA POLICE FORCE.

But with the other nations, the United States included, the first question remains, nevertheless. Is it necessary that the sea belong practically to one power, and has there to be one master? They

naturally answer this question in the negative. As a basic principle of international law, the sea belongs only to the adjacent states, as regards the so-called territorial water; for the rest it is *res nullius*, free for all. Nobody is entitled to be master there, or to play there the master. The sea is open for all to navigate and to fish in, and conflicts while using the sea for these ends must be prevented by a common sea police.

The origin of all trouble at sea is the war fleets themselves, their mutual rivalry, their taking and destroying of the merchant ships of others, finally the measures they arrogate to themselves against the neutral ships.

## FIRST STEPS TOWARD A PERMANENT WORLD PEACE.

A permanent world peace requires obviously more incisive measures than those which have been advocated by the Interparliamentary Union. This worldwide peace, to be lasting, can best be brought about by the acknowledgment and application of the three following principles:

1. That the sea is free, belonging to no nation.
2. That the sea is only for the common use of all peoples for peaceful purposes.
3. That this use and the use of straits and maritime canals as means of access to it be secured upon an equal footing for every nation by an international sea police.

An international fleet would bring to an end the necessity of coast defence, for attacks from the sea side would be impossible, and the transport of military forces would be as far as needed under the control of the international sea police. It would liberate the powers who compete for the majority at sea from a burden which is already heavy and threatens to get unbearable if continued in the present way.

## LIBERATION FROM THE BURDEN OF COAST DEFENCE.

The fleet would also liberate them from a moral burden. Even more than the war on land the present sea war renders men inhuman. Think out in its details the possibility of their starving women, children and aged men, forcing the German soldiers to lay down their arms, to deliver their fleet and to become themselves unarmed helots of French and Russian rulers. These inhuman demands render inhuman those who make them. Every Englishman who condemns, and rightly condemns, the present action of the submarines may keep in mind that this form of war is an answer to his own unjust and arbitrary definition of food not destined directly for armed forces as contraband. Unless there are made new general rules, as indicated heretofore, all states will have to compete *bon gre mal gre* for superiority under the sea. For none of them is this an attractive task.

Has an international regulation providing for this police fleet a chance to be accepted? I answer with a counter question: Why not, if it is good and relieves all peoples of a heavy burden?

But will England give up her supremacy on the sea by free assent? This question England will have to answer herself. Those who support a new organization which leaves England equal

rights with all others are not bound to give their plans because England may possibly oppose them. England is equally oppressed by the costs of her mighty position, and this position would become much more difficult if she opposed a new organization against the unanimous wish of all others.

And the free co-operation of England—why would not that be possible? England varies also in her international policy. It has followed a line which for England has been reactionary. The policy which became paramount with the abolition of Cromwell's mercantile laws and of the corn duties, commonly called that of Cobden and Bright, has temporarily lost its ascendancy by the treason of Chamberlain. By 1906 it was restored to power. The formation of the Campbell-Bannerman ministry was a change of play as well as of players. English public opinion in the party that secured control of its government was anti-military. She wished reduction of the costs of the navy and friendly relations with other countries. Unhappily she was from the beginning hindered in her policy by the naval policy of Germany, which did not build more than two-thirds of the number of warships constructed by England, ignoring the fact that the party in power in England built her three-thirds not of her own free will, but only to maintain this proportion against Germany.

## AN ATROCIOUS SITUATION WHEN THE FIGHTING IS OVER.

Under the influence of these circumstances the cosmopolitan and pacific party in the ministry weakened, and the national egotistical spirit, represented by the House of Lords and the Unionist party, became ascendant. So it came that war was seized as a means to destroy the imminent competition for the mastery of the sea.

Nevertheless, nobody can say what England will do should Germany, Russia and other nations adopt in principle that freedom of the sea without any other navy than an international police fleet. It would surely be accepted as an abandonment by Germany of the important expression of its "militarism," because of which the official English press say the war was begun.

The immense extension of the present war, the inhumanity of the ways of waging war and the still more atrocious situation which will arise if all people continue in rivalry to make technical processes subservient to mutual destruction require from the friends of peaceful negotiation and the co-operation of the peoples equally drastic means of common action.

It gets more and more clear for all that the matter is no more some small displacement of power, but the continuation of ruin of our entire civilization.

Let us for the sake of argument assume that Belgium has become involved in the present war through diplomatic blundering. Let us even divide the blame over both states, on Germany's side contempt for the infraction of the rights of a neutral, publicly acknowledged by its Chancellor, and the consequences of this infraction; on the side of Belgium military preparation, based

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